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THE STATUS OF GERMAN INSTRUCTION IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF THE EASTERN STATES

By J. PRESTON HOSKINS

From the Report presented at Baltimore by the Chairman of a Committee appointed to work for the Resumption of German Instruction in our Secondary Schools

DURING the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association at Poughkeepsie in 1920 the professors and teachers of German in attendance held a special meeting on December 29th to discuss the status of German instruction in our schools and colleges. At this meeting a committee, consisting of E. W. Bagster-Collins (Columbia), C. W. Eastman (Amherst), C. H. Handschin (Miami), J. P. Hoskins (Princeton), D. B. Shumway (Pennsylvania) and M. C. Stewart (Union) was appointed for the purpose of ascertaining the present status of German instruction and of achieving the resumption of the same as rapidly as possible. Professor J. P. Hoskins of Princeton was made chairman and Professor C. H. Hanschin, secretary of this committee which was further empowered to subdivide its work and to add additional members, to the number of nine or more, as the situation seemed to require.

As a state of war existed technically between the United States and Germany until last July, the Committee spent most of its time up to that date in making a survey of the situation in the states along the Atlantic seaboard. After July it continued the work of gathering information and began the work of circularizing school authorities in behalf of the reinstatement of the German language in school courses of study. As the result of its efforts along these lines the Committee offers this report of the status of German instruction in the territory usually included in the Eastern Section of the Modern Language Association.

The difficulty in obtaining an accurate survey of the situation in the different states composing this territory led the Committee to the organization of a sub-committee representing the different states whose business it should be to furnish the Chairman an accurate account of the situation in the leading cities of each state and to report on the attitude of the local public in regard to the teaching of the German language. On this committee

Professors C. W. Eastman of Amherst and F. W. C. Lieder of Harvard were appointed for the state of Massachusetts; Professor Carl F. Schreiber of Yale represented Connecticut; Professor A. K. Hardy of Dartmouth consented to serve for New Hampshire and Professor F. D. Carpenter (of the U. of V.) for Vermont; in New York State, Professor M. C. Stewart of Union College and Dr. J. B. E. Jonas of the De Witt Clinton High School undertook the work; for New Jersey the Chairman assumed responsibility and for Pennsylvania, Professor Raschen of Pittsburgh and Professor Shumway of Philadelphia have done most of the work. It would be invidious to single out any of these names for special mention but the Chairman wants to take this opportunity to thank these men, one and all, most heartily for the cordial cooperation they have given him in a somewhat difficult and delicate task. Without their assistance and advice it would have been impossible to have accomplished a tithe of what has been done.

In making our survey we confined ourselves in general to places with a population of 30,000 and upwards on the assumption that, if the teaching of German were resumed in these cities and towns, it would follow largely of itself in smaller places. Besides, with the time at our command it was impossible to carry out investigations further. Bearing the fact in mind that reliable official statistics are to be had only exceptionally the committee offers the following report as furnishing the most complete view it is able to produce at the present time.

We shall begin with the public high schools in our large cities and then proceed to the several states:

In the City of Boston the teaching of German was never put under the official ban and that language has been taught continuously in some of the high schools both during and since the war. According to a table of statistics compiled by Mr. Joel Hatheway, Chief Examiner of the School Committee, there were in 10 of the 15 high schools reported, a total of 1623 pupils enrolled in German classes in the year 1913-1914; this present year there is a total of 977 pupils enrolled in German in 7 of the high schools. Three of these schools have a larger enrollment in German than in 1913-1914, while in 4 the enrollment has decreased. On the whole the situation is a very encouraging one.

In New York City, as all are aware, German was put under the official ban shortly after we entered the war. As a result the enrollment sank from 23898, or 26.4% of the total registration, in 1916-1917 to 532, or .077%, in March 1920. In February 1921 German was officially restored to the course of study and classes were started in 9 of the 28 high schools with a total enrollment of 881. In September of this school-year classes in German were started in 2 additional high schools and the total enrollment is now 1586, a gain of almost 80% in six months.

In Buffalo, the teaching of German was never discontinued. In 1919-20, the latest figures I have been able to get on the subject, there was an enrollment of 562 in German compared with 425 in Spanish and 1635 in French, pointing to the fact that, outside of New York City itself, Spanish has not had such an abnormal growth throughout the state.

In Newark, N. J., as everywhere else in the state, German was put under the official ban and the enrollment sank to practically nothing. On the first of last September the ban was lifted and, when schools opened, classes in German were started in all four high schools with a total enrollment of 145. It is confidently expected that this number will be doubled before the end of the school year, as new classes can be started both in December and February.

In Philadelphia, German is still under the ban of the Board of Education. Your Chairman has had some correspondence with the City Superintendent and Professor Shumway has interviewed him personally several times. The question of restoring German was considered by the Board of Superintendents in November and there is every probability that German will be reinstated in time to start classes next September.

In Pittsburgh, German instruction was never officially prohibited but the study gradually died a natural death. Efforts to revive it last June were not successful. At present another attempt is being made with some prospects that German classes can be started in one or two of the high schools this February.

In Baltimore also the teaching of German was officially prohibited. But this fall President Goodnow of Johns Hopkins, who is also a member of the Board of Education, used his good offices and that body decided to start classes in German in February.

In Washington, German was reinstated, as an authorized subject, in the schools by act of Congress as early as May 1919. But classes in that language were not started in the high-schools until last September. Statistics in regard to the enrollment have not been forthcoming.

To summarize: of these eight cities of first importance here in the East the official ban on German still exists in only one: Philadelphia; and German classes are actually going on at the present time in all but three: Philadelphia, Baltimore and Pittsburgh.

Turning now to the several states under consideration we shall find much that is encouraging. Since schools opened in September a brief questionnaire was sent to the five leading cities in the state of Maine. This revealed the fact that German instruction was never discontinued in the largest city, Portland. From Bangor the city superintendent wrote that German is still being offered in the high school there and will continue to be offered in spite of the fact that there have been no takers for the last two years. In Lewiston, classes in German have been discontinued for lack of students. From Bath and Biddeford no replies have been received, but Maine seems to be another New England state in which no official ban was laid upon the teaching of German.

In New Hampshire the teaching of German was nowhere prohibited. As a matter of fact, German was never a very popular language in the schools of the state owing to the fact that there is such a large admixture of French Canadians in the population of the manufacturing towns. But the effect of the war on the German enrollment can be seen from the fact that the total enrollment of 753 in 40 schools in 1914-1915 dropped to 111 in 8 schools in 1920-1921, while Spanish rose from an enrollment of 69 in 8 schools to 335 in 15 schools during the same period. This year there is apparently some improvement in the German enrollment. Four high schools (Nashua, Manchester, Plymouth, and Dover) show a total enrollment of 85 with four other schools still to be heard from.

In Vermont the Appelmann incident seems to have left a very bad taste in the mouth of the rural communities and a strong prejudice against German still exists. That language is still being taught in one high school, that of St. Albans, and the school authorities stand ready to begin classes in Burlington just as soon

as enough pupils demand it. From other places no reports have been received.

On the whole Massachusetts makes the best showing at the present time. So far as the Committee has been able to ascertain the ban was laid upon German nowhere in the state. Outside of Boston, German is now being taught in three schools in Worcester and in two in Springfield. In addition to this, German classes are going on in the high-schools of Amherst, Brockton, Fall River, Gloucester, Greenfield, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Salem and Somerville. In New Bedford a class in German is to be started in February and in only one town, Pittsfield, has German been discontinued for the lack of pupils. Judging from the statistics received from some places, the enrollment is only about one-fourth or one-fifth of what it was in 1913-1914. But the encouraging sign is that German classes are going on in so many places with no official obstacles to be overcome, and Massachusetts bids fair to be the first state to return to a state of 'normalcy,' if there is such a word, so far as the teaching of German is concerned.

From Rhode Island we know only that German was reinstated in the schools of Providence in February 1921. To date no statistics in regard to enrollment have come to hand.

The situation in Connecticut compares very favorably with that in Massachusetts. In only three places reported: Derby, New London and South Norwalk, is the study of German put under the official ban. These three places have been duly circularized by the Committee without, as yet, drawing a reply. But the high school of New Haven shows a German enrollment of 250 and that of Hartford 150. In addition to these two places German classes are to be found in the high schools of Bridgeport, Middletown, New Britain, Stamford and Waterbury.

New York State presents a much more variegated appearance. We have already spoken of the situation in New York City and Buffalo. Besides the last named place, the teaching of German was never discontinued in Binghamton and Rochester where last year there was an enrollment of 112 in two high schools. In addition to these places, German is now being taught in two schools in Albany and in the high school of Schenectady. Only a few days ago I was informed that there was a beginners' class of 25 in the

high school of Newburgh and late in November the ban on German was raised by the School Board of Syracuse. This I take to mean that classes in German will be begun in February in this last named city. But to offset this record there are a number of important centers in the state like Auburn, Elmira, Oswego, Poughkeepsie, Watertown and Yonkers, where no ban has ever been put upon German, but where there are no classes in that language for the lack of a demand on the part of pupils. Besides this, German has been put under the official ban in a number of places, like Amsterdam, Canajoharie, Glen Falls, Gloversville, Plattsburg, Niagara Falls and Utica. The efforts of the Committee to circularize Amsterdam, Niagara Falls and Utica have, as yet, met with no response.

In New Jersey, the teaching of German was forbidden in every place of importance by action of the local school-boards, except in the city of Plainfield where classes in German were discontinued for lack of pupils and have not yet been revived. A soon as the United States Senate declared last July a state of peace to exist between the United States and Germany, your Chairman sent circular letters to school-superintendents in some thirteen of the chief towns and cities of the state. When the schools opened in September the official ban had been lifted in only three places: Newark, the little town of Irvington where there is a beginners' class of 25 in German this year, and Princeton where the ban was lifted last May, but where no classes have yet been started for the lack of a sufficient number of pupils to warrant it. In November a second circular letter was sent to those towns from which no answer had been received. This appeal brought a partial response. From Jersey City, Elizabeth and Camden, word was received that the question of the reinstatement of German was to be considered in the near future. The superintendent in Paterson writes that he does not yet consider the time ripe for a discussion of the question. A personal interview with the City Superintendent and President of the Board of Education in Trenton revealed the fact that political complications will prevent the German language question from being taken up before the Board of Education is reorganized in February. From other places—Atlantic City, Bayonne, Hoboken, New Brunswick, Orange, East Orange, Passaic and Perth Amboy—no replies have

been received either to our first or to our second appeal. So there is little prospect at present that German instruction will be restored in any more places before the beginning of the next school year in September.

As a state in which the teaching of German was almost entirely eliminated and which is only just beginning to reinstate that language, New Jersey furnishes a fine field in which to study the injurious effects of the war on foreign language study in general. For a brief discussion of this phase of the situation, the reader may consult the writer's report on *The Status of the Foreign Languages in the High-Schools of New Jersey* published in the February (1922) number of the *Modern Language Journal*.

Compared with New Jersey, the situation in Pennsylvania is somewhat more encouraging. We have already given some account of the situation in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. After a state of peace had been declared by the United States Senate, Professor Raschen of Pittsburgh sent out our first circular letter to the city-superintendents in eleven different places. This letter revealed the fact that German classes had never been discontinued in Allentown, Lancaster, Scranton and, thanks to the efforts of President Drinker of Lehigh University, in South Bethlehem. German had further been restored to the course of study in Altoona in September 1920 and in Wilkes-Barre in August 1921.

During the month of November a second circular letter was sent by Professor Shumway to the remaining seven places. Three answers were received. From Reading the Assistant-Superintendent writes that the question of reinstating German will be taken up at the next meeting of the Teachers' Committee. Chester and Harrisburg report that the time is not yet ripe for a discussion of the question in those localities. From Bethlehem, Erie, Johnstown and York no answer of any kind was received. The same holds true of your Chairman's two efforts to reach the city-superintendents in Wilmington, Delaware.

To sum up the situation: the problem in New England and in New York is chiefly one of leading the people to take a more favorable attitude toward the study of German. Sober second thought and a calm consideration of the situation from the objective point of view will go far toward restoring German to its pre-war status, for only in a comparatively small number of places is

there any official obstacle in the way of resuming instruction in German. In New Jersey and in Pennsylvania, in addition to overcoming the feeling against the German language which still exists, the official ban on the teaching of that language will have to be lifted in a large number of places before the resumption of the study can be attained.

This survey would not be complete without a brief reference to the status of German in the colleges and private preparatory schools. Let it be frankly stated at the outset that the Committee has made no attempt to canvass these institutions in any systematic fashion, chiefly for the reason that it has heard of no single institution of this kind in the East where the teaching of German has been discontinued or where any official action has been taken which could be interpreted as inimical to German. As a matter of fact these institutions seem to have done all in their power to conserve German from the realization that the language was indispensable in all scholarly lines of work. Besides this, statistics bearing on this phase of the situation have already appeared in print.

Of course the German enrollment in the colleges was very seriously affected by the war, particularly in graduate courses and in courses in the upper years. The effect on the women's colleges was particularly severe. But it may be taken as a healthy sign of reaction that the Faculty of Bryn Mawr College has this fall, by an almost unanimous vote, made a knowledge of the German language a requirement for graduation. This action is bound to have its effect on the girls' preparatory schools.

Most of the men's colleges of which I have any knowledge have had enough students to keep all their regular undergraduate courses going, and will recoup their losses as fast as the number of candidates entering with German returns to something like normal. Harvard has steadily refused to accept any other language than German and French as requirements for graduation. As a result, about 700 students are taking elementary German in that institution this year, and the total German enrollment is 1060, compared with 1101 in the year 1914. At Yale, the German enrollment has sunk to about 150, and at Princeton to 200, or to less than 40% of what it would be under normal condi-

tions. But as these two institutions get about 80% of their students from private preparatory schools, and as German classes are rapidly increasing in size there, we may look for a very marked improvement next year.

One of the most noteworthy effects of the elimination of German in the secondary schools has been the remarkable increase in the size of elementary classes in our colleges and universities, a sign showing that the demand for German has not died out but, under present conditions, has to be met in a different way. We have already mentioned Harvard. Similar large increases in elementary courses have been reported during the last two years from Columbia and from the University of Pennsylvania, and from Wesleyan we hear this year that the unprecedented enrollment in German I has necessitated the formation of a fourth section.

On the whole then, I think we may say, that the movement 'back to German' has made a fair start so far as the East is concerned. I look to see the official ban on German raised before the beginning of the next school year in most places, but it will probably be two or three years more before the enrollment in German classes everywhere will return to figures comparable with those of the years immediately preceding the war.

Princeton, N. J.

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